

**EPIDEMIA, CONTAGION, AND
INFECTION, WITH THEIR REMEDIES; AN
ESSAY: TO WHICH
IS ADDED AN ENQUIRY INTO THE
NATURE OF THE MODE BY WHICH
CHOLERA IS PROPAGATED**

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Epidemia, Contagion, and Infection, with Their Remedies; an Essay: To Which Is Added an Enquiry into the Nature of the Mode by Which Cholera Is Propagated by Benjamin Phillips

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BENJAMIN PHILLIPS

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S. J. K. 1092.

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PREFACE.

So long a period has elapsed since Europe was visited by a violent and fatal epidemic, that the steady progress and fatal character of the Asiatic Cholera, which has at length reached our own shores, has filled the public mind with alarm and dismay.

Originating at the Delta of the Ganges, in 1817, this disease has ravaged nearly the whole of Asia and a great portion of Europe; proceeding sometimes from town to town and country to country, in regular succession, and appearing, at others, simultaneously in distant districts.

Nourished into existence in a humid atmosphere acted upon by a burning sun, it has preserved its identity alike in the pestilential marshes of the Continent of India, in the sandy deserts of Arabia, and in the frozen wilds of the Northern provinces of Asiatic Russia.

Having radiated as from a common centre round the point where it first appeared, it has successively desolated the Continent of India, proceeding to the Southward as far as the Mauritius; the Eastern provinces of Asia, extending as far as China; the Northern provinces of Russia, reaching almost to Archangel; and traversed Westward to our own shores.

The history of the human race presents but few instances of any disease so extensively propagated, and so fatal alike in all climates; and we cannot, therefore, wonder that its progress has been watched with apprehension, its arrival hailed with dismay.

Man always magnifies what he imperfectly understands, and exaggerates the dangers he does not accurately comprehend. The object of the following Essay is to furnish correct information on a subject so deeply interesting to every one; and the Author trusts the unquestionable importance of the topics on which he has treated, and the sincere desire he feels to contribute, however slightly, to enlighten the public mind, will be deemed a sufficient apology for the defects, both of matter and manner, which the work may exhibit.

Cholera must either originate in atmospheric influence, or be produced by local exhalations proceeding from animal or vegetable decomposition: in either case, it may afterwards be transmitted from person to person by contagion.

The Author has, therefore, devoted a large portion

of the following pages to an investigation of the cause and of the effects on the animal frame of ordinary and extraordinary changes of the atmosphere ; the origin, the progress, and the effects of local exhalations ; with the probable remedies for such exhalations when producing infectious disorders ; and the laws which govern the transmission of disease from person to person, producing in the one a disease identical in character with that which existed in the other.

In pursuing this investigation, he has collected all the facts which appeared to him to bear upon those questions ; has noticed the several epidemical diseases that, at different periods in the history of the human race, have traversed large portions of the old world ; has shewn the fatal character of local exhalations—producing, as they do, when identical in character, diseases of a different kind in different individuals—such diseases being occasionally, and occasionally only, transmissible from person to person by contagion ; and has examined the origin, the progress, the continuance, and the effects of those contagious disorders that have been most narrowly observed and most carefully investigated.

It may be the opinion of some of his readers, that he has devoted too much space to the narration, and occupied too much time in the investigation, of particular diseases bearing, as may be said, no relation to Cholera ; and others may reproach him with having pronounced no exclusive opinion of the character and

action of Cholera. His answer, in both instances, will be alike. His object has been the collection of facts, the observation of cases, and the investigation of truth. He has not sought to build up an hypothesis. He does not wish to pronounce an oracular opinion upon a question hitherto, perhaps, insufficiently investigated.

CHAPTER I.

EPIDEMIA.

By the term Epidemia is understood any disease, however propagated, which attacks simultaneously a number of persons.

Epidemic diseases may be produced through the agency of contagion, of infection, of certain atmospheric changes, or of certain ingesta.

I shall here limit myself to the description of those epidemic diseases which are dependent on atmospherical influence, or certain ingesta; postponing the questions of infection and contagion to a later portion of the present Essay.

The atmosphere may present, as exciting causes, heat or cold, humidity or dryness, and a greater or less quantity of electricity.

The ingesta may be either small in quantity or deleterious in quality.

With respect to heat and cold, and their probable effects in producing epidemics, our data are totally insufficient to enable us to come to any satisfactory conclusion.